

*The liturgy is essentially Trinitarian in nature, and must be viewed in the context of the entire economy of salvation.*

# The Holy Spirit and the Church in the liturgy

*By Cassian Folsom*

■ The liturgical section of the new Catechism (CCC 1066-1209) has a much different feel to it than the sacramental section (CCC 1210-1690). Why? Could it be because the two sections use different sources? The basic source for the sacramental section is the Roman Catechism of St. Pius V,<sup>1</sup> and therefore has an obviously western ethos. The basic source for the liturgical section, on the other hand, is Fr. Jean Corbon and his book, *The Wellspring of Worship*;<sup>2</sup> this section breathes a different air than many of us are accustomed to because much of its vocabulary comes from "the other lung" of the Catholic Church, that is, the eastern lung. This article will describe the influence of Fr. Corbon on the liturgical section of the new Catechism, especially as exemplified in paragraphs 1091-1109: the Holy Spirit and the Church in the liturgy.

## The influence of Fr. Jean Corbon

Who is Fr. Corbon, and how did he come to be involved with the new Catechism? Born in Paris in 1924, Fr. Corbon is a priest of the Greek-Catholic eparchy of

Catechism:  
After having resolved to add a distinct fourth part on prayer to the first three, we looked for a representative of Eastern theology. Since it was not possible to secure a bishop as author, we settled upon Jean Corbon, who wrote the beautiful concluding text on prayer while in beleaguered Beirut, frequently in the midst of dramatic situations, taking shelter in his basement in order to continue working during the bombardments.<sup>4</sup>

Beirut. He teaches Liturgy and Ecumenism at the University of the Holy Spirit in Kalik, and the University of St. Joseph in Beirut. In addition, he is the secretary of the commission for ecumenical relations of the Assembly of the Catholic Patriarchs and Bishops of Lebanon.<sup>3</sup>  
Cardinal Ratzinger tells the story of how Fr. Corbon came to be associated with the

Father Corbon, then, was responsible for the fourth part on prayer, not the second part on liturgy and sacraments. The editorial team for the liturgical-sacramental section was made up of Bishop Medina of Chile and Bishop Karlic of Argentina.<sup>5</sup> However, the sub-section entitled *The Liturgy: Work of the Holy Trinity* (CCC 1077-1112) bears the unmistakable mark of Fr. Corbon, and

In the body of Christ and flowing forth from it, the Holy Spirit is as it were the impatient desire of the Father's glory that human beings should live. In this body which has overcome the limitations of death the Spirit acts henceforth with power. And when he elicits our response to his multiform energy, the Spirit and the Church become one in an astounding "synergy": the liturgy (Corbon, pp. 65-66).

Compare the text of Fr. Corbon with paragraph 1091 of the Catechism:

The desire and work of the Spirit in the heart of the Church is that we may live from the life of the risen Christ. When the Spirit encounters in us the response of faith which he has aroused in us, he brings about genuine *cooperation*. Through it, the liturgy becomes the *common work* of the Holy Spirit and the Church. [emphasis mine]

The words in italics, "cooperation" and "common work" are English equivalents for the Greek word "synergeia," which Fr. Corbon, in a special glossary, defines as "combined energy" or "joint activity." It is a complex term with a rich history; here it refers to the union of the energy of the Holy Spirit with human energy, or in other words, the union of the divine Yes and the human Yes. The energy of the Holy Spirit together with the energy of the Church equals *synergy*. The word synergy itself, however, is not used in the Catechism. Why not? Perhaps because the word has a controverted history; perhaps because it was too technical or because it would be unfamiliar to the reader. In any case, when the Catechism uses such expressions as "cooperation" or "common work," the notion of synergy is clearly intended. Fr. Corbon makes quite clear what he intends by this word, and why he prefers the Greek word to an anglicized equivalent:

Readers will understand my preferring [synergy] to "cooperation" (an equivalent term derived from Latin), since the connotations of the latter are quite different in the modern languages. The "synergy" of the Holy Spirit and the Church is a key idea for an understanding of the mystery of

*The action of the Holy Spirit in the liturgy is more hidden, more mysterious, and for that reason less known, and less frequently the object of theological reflection.*

reflects the single most important insight of his book, *The Wellspring of Worship*: namely, that the liturgy is essentially Trinitarian in nature.

The action of the Father as the source and goal of the liturgy (CCC 1077-1083) is commonly understood, and the work of the Son in the liturgy (CCC 1084-1090) is even more familiar (which is not to say that we can ever plumb the depths of these mysteries, and Fr. Corbon can help us to do that!). The action of the Holy Spirit, however, is more hidden, more mysterious, and for that reason less known, and less frequently the object of theological reflection. For that reason the section on the work of the Holy Spirit in the liturgy (CCC 1091-1109) is remarkable for bringing to light an aspect of the Church's pneumatological tradition, formerly hidden from a large majority of Catholics. Even from the very practical point of view of length, this section is longer and more fully developed than the sections on the Father and the Son, precisely because this element of the liturgy has been largely overlooked by the Western Church in the past. Here the hand of Fr. Corbon is clearly in evidence.

The Holy Spirit and the Church in the liturgy (CCC 1091-1109)

Chapter Eight of Fr. Corbon's book, *The Wellspring of Worship*, is entitled "The Holy Spirit and the Church in the Liturgy"; clearly the inspiration for both the title and the content of this section of the Catechism. In his book, Fr. Corbon explains that:

**When  
Monsignor  
Smith asks  
...We comply!**

**In HPR's November  
"Questions answered,"  
Msgr. William Smith  
wrote a withering critique  
of *Together for Life*, the  
much used marriage prep  
booklet, which he called  
Catholic 'Life.'**

**H**e praised John Kippley's *Mar-*

*riage Is for Keeps*, saying it "is so far superior, so much richer in the doctrine and morals of marriage, that there is no serious comparison with *Together for Life* which is not so much a poor second, but just poor in doctrine and anemic in morals."

Msgr. Smith's only criticism was that *Marriage Is for Keeps* did not include the Rite of Marriage or *Lectionary and Sacramentary readings*

**...Well, now it does!**

***Marriage Is for Keeps***

fills the need pastors have long had for an orthodox wedding preparation book—*with Rite and Readings*—that also prepares couples for lifelong Catholic marriages.

**180 pps., \$6.95 plus shipping**  
Quantity discounts available

**FOUNDATION for the FAMILY**

Box 111184 • Dept. 116  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45211  
Orders: 1-800-745-8252

the liturgy. It has its foundation in Christ himself. Being true God and true man, Jesus has two wills (contrary to the Monothelite heresy) and two operations or "energies" (contrary to the Monoenergist heresy), which de facto are in union but freely so and without confusion. Thus Christian sanctity is wholly located in the divinization of our nature in Christ... through the union of our wills with that of the Father in Christ and through the "synergy" of the baptized and the Holy Spirit in every vital action. This union of wills is love in operation... (Corbon, p. 192, n. 1).<sup>7</sup>

It is important to note that Fr. Corbon, in his book, explains a triple energy of the Holy Spirit (Corbon, pp. 67-73): the first, to manifest Christ to us (cf. CCC 1099, the Holy Spirit recalls the mystery of Christ), i.e. anamnetic synergy; the second, to transform us into the glorious body of the Lord (cf. CCC 1104, the Holy Spirit makes present the mystery of Christ), i.e. epiclestic synergy; the third, to insert us into the communion of Christ with the Father (cf. CCC 1108, the communion of the Holy Spirit), i.e. the synergy of communion. In comparing Fr. Corbon with the Catechism, the only difference is that the Catechism has a preparatory stage: the Holy Spirit prepares for the reception of Christ (cf. CCC 1093), i.e. preparatory synergy. Let us examine each of these four aspects in turn.

**Preparatory synergy:** The Holy Spirit prepares for the reception of Christ. In particular, the Holy Spirit readies the heart of the believer to listen to the Word of God, to understand the Scriptures as a unified whole whose content is the person of Christ. This requires a spiritual or typological interpretation of the Scriptures, for hidden under the letter of the Old Testament are various figures or types which point to their fulfillment in the mystery of Christ (cf. CCC 1094; cf. also CCC 115-119 on the senses of Scripture). It is the Holy Spirit who "fulfills what was prefigured in the Old Covenant" (CCC 1093). This is very important, since it reminds us once again of

